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P. M. S. W.

(35)

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Please address any reply to:
The Secretary and quote:
654/40106/2
P. 2/942/31/2.

Whitehall,
London, S. W. 1.

26th August, 1964.

Town and Country Planning Act 1962
Proposals for Alterations or Additions to the Development Plan
for Cambridgeshire
First Quinquennial Review - Cambridge Town Map
Comprehensive Development Area No. 4
(Lion Yard, Cambridge).

I am directed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to refer to the above submissions and to say that he is prepared to accept the council's proposals for the first quinquennial review of the Cambridge Town Map, subject to the modifications shown in the attached List A.

As far as the Lion Yard Comprehensive Development Area is concerned the Minister is satisfied that its redevelopment is necessary in order to deal with the prevailing conditions of bad layout and obsolete development.

On the future use of the land he agrees with the council and the objectors that the Lion Yard area is a key area for the improvement of the central area, and that this improvement must be the determining factor in the redevelopment of the land.

The issue here is to reconcile the two functions of Cambridge as a regional centre and as a university town. The Minister is not convinced that it is necessary to pursue a drastic policy for the removal of the regional shopping facilities from inside the ring of colleges, but it is nevertheless clear that the existing arrangement of uses has produced an intolerable congestion both of people and vehicles within this ring. The Minister notes that the Council

propose to cure this congestion by a co-ordinated series of new roads and car-parks; and he appreciates, although such a proposal is not before him, that it is intended in due course to provide a traffic-free precinct within the central area; but he is not satisfied that these measures will be adequate if the whole of the City's central shopping facilities are kept within the existing ring. This would result in both an intensified use of shopping space and a nett increase in its total area; and these factors would add to the congestion and operate against the council's proposals for its alleviation.

In reaching this conclusion he has had in mind the likelihood that the existing conditions of congestion have kept down the number of shoppers in the central area and in particular the number of shoppers visiting the central area by car. It is reasonable to assume that there is a substantial latent demand quite apart from the normal growth of traffic, but this cannot be measured, and it does not appear to have been allowed for in the council's traffic proposals. Moreover, the current movement towards the establishment of really large supermarkets, which attract particularly large numbers of people and vehicles, has hardly yet reached Cambridge. It is, however, growing in other regional centres, and there is no reason for thinking it will pass Cambridge by. This development would involve a substantial additional increase in traffic, and the Minister is convinced that such an increase could not reasonably be contained within the present central area. He appreciates the limitations of development control in this matter, and he considers that the right course is for the council to take positive action to provide for these high intensity shopping uses elsewhere. This provision should be made on land which is as close as possible to the central area, so that it may conveniently be visited by shoppers at the same time as they visit the existing central area, but located - with its approach roads and substantial car parks - outside the actual ring of colleges. These considerations point clearly to the use for these purposes of land to the east of Emmanuel Road and north of Parker Street.

The redevelopment of an area of land here for this purpose appears to the Minister to be the most urgent step to be taken to reduce congestion in the central area, and he considers that an immediate start should be made with proposals for it.

With this new area to provide both for types of shop not at present established in the City and for expansion of the volume of central area shopping generally, it becomes possible to provide that the volume of shopping within the ring of the colleges should not increase. This the Minister considers to be essential if the council's proposals to reduce congestion there are to be effective.

The proposals at present before the Minister allow for a substantial increase in shopping floor-space in the Lion Yard, quite apart from the tolerances which will have to be permitted on redevelopment in the remainder of the central area, unless heavy claims for compensation are to be incurred. The Minister does not consider this satisfactory. Nevertheless he shares the anxiety of both authorities that a redevelopment scheme of high quality should be embarked on immediately in the Lion Yard, and he recognises that the City Council would be faced with a considerable financial burden if no increase in shopping were permitted in this area. In order, therefore, to encourage rapid action, he is prepared to authorise an increase in shopping floor-space to the extent of 30,000 sq. ft. above the level existing at the date of this submission. He wishes it to be clearly understood, however, that his proposals for reducing the pressure on the central area by providing an extension outside the ring of colleges must be implemented quickly, and a strict control must be maintained over existing central area shopping, if the present congestion is not to be increased. The Minister therefore asks that the council will prepare a scheme for the Lion Yard area concurrently (after conducting the necessary surveys) with comprehensive development or proposals for the extension of the central shopping area to the east of Emmanuel Road and north of Parker Street, and will submit them to him within the next few months.

With regard to car parking, he notes the council's proposals ultimately to establish a pedestrian precinct in the central area itself. The multi-storey car park the council propose in the Lion Yard area is not in his view inconsistent with such a long-term aim, as it is possible to provide a good access from outside the central area, and it should have immediate value as part of a general scheme of reducing congestion in the streets of the central area themselves. He considers that the remainder of the land in the Comprehensive Development Area should be used for such civic and university uses as are not likely to add to the congestion of the central area as a whole.

The Minister accordingly proposes to amend the Comprehensive Development Area Map No. 4 by the modifications shown in List B enclosed.

List C sets out the proposed modifications to the Written Statement.

The council are requested to insert in not less than two local newspapers circulating in the areas affected by the proposals, for at least two successive weeks, a notice drawing attention to the proposed modifications to the Town Map and Comprehensive Development Area proposals and the Minister's reasons for proposing them as set out in this letter. The notice should specify a period not less than twenty-one days during which objections may be sent to the Minister. A copy of the published notice should be sent to this office.

Form AP46A is enclosed for your general guidance on the lines to be followed in the published notice. The modifications may be illustrated where necessary by plans.

Twelve copies of the Inspector's report are enclosed for deposit with the proposed modifications.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
(Signed) W. C. KNOX.